

## **Consultants Focus Group 1:00 7/1/04**

**Attendance:** Susan Puntillo, notes; Mark McDermid, facilitator; Tim Ambrosius, Steve Bischoff, Leslie Busse, Mark Halleen, Joel Schittone, Richard Weber, Hooshang Zeghami

**Introduction:** Information gathering, need their perspectives, doing this because of budget issues, desire to take advantage of new technologies

### **Group Expectations or What they wanted to see coming out of today's session:**

- They want to see all the comments from all the groups. Encouraged them to wait until the drafts are finalized.
- How our business is affected by their actions, and looking for ideas to improve them – business focus happy to see
- Hoping DNR will make changes as a result of meetings. Become more open minded to enviro experts or business world in streamlining system and being aware of cost effects
- Something positive and significant will come out of all this effort. Help solid waste and all of DNR and the state of WI. We compete against other states.
- Some improvement on procedures and more team work between business and the dept.
- Good discussion about things that have worked well in the approval process and areas where we need improvement and implement ideas
- Process from thought, design, construction – try to make it a group effort – let the dept. professional people be professional – work as a unit. Approve permit so everyone is satisfied. Not necessarily just quickly
- Open minded and do not push back against change, but look for ways to overcome obstacles – Don't be afraid to be a leader in potential changes that could occur

**Question 1: What are the business needs and technology advances that you believe we should be aware of in issuing solid and hazardous waste approvals and licenses?**

- Time is money
- Need to meet schedule expectations
- Add performance based requirements rather than prescriptive code based
- Electronic submittals – need to deal with e-signature
- DNR is ultra conservative – if it has not happened in the state we are reluctant to embrace (bioreactors, leachate reservoirs, and large-scale landfills)
- DNR should recognize that WI is not that much different than other mid-western states
- Open to changes in technology and new products
- We do not attend national technical conferences – by product of budget cuts
- Decentralization has hampered communication, peer exchange of ideas
- Code allows alternative designs, but we do not embrace this and make it hard to enact alternatives – if can't check the box do not want to complicate their life so won't do or 'I have to talk to my supervisor' (pvc in geocomposite in land fill covers, polyethylene liners, reduce the frequency of destructive seam testing, NR538 industrial by-product reuse should expand the list)
- Placement of geo panels – generates lots of reports that do nothing. Consideration of code changes
- Flexibility to reconsider changes in technology without always going back to the code and code changes
- Administrative code is not a statute it is a guideline
- Proving alternatives or variance request is not easy –
- General perspective staff is very good
- No consistency between folks

**Question 2: What business needs are currently not met by our program or in our approvals and permitting?**

- Lack of commitment and accountability in terms of schedule
- Redundancies – modification, but treat like new
- Pipe calculations – over and over again
- Interface sheer – we know which are the worst – don't look at all of them – work has been done and looked at for the last 20 years
- Approval process – WC is really good about sharing draft approvals. Just tremendous – not consistent across regions or even in a region
- Consistency – function of decentralization – no review, supervision or accountability – organization issue not location issue
- Communication is impacted by budget cuts
- Review engineers not near area they are serving
- Sups are not expert in the field
- Review engineers have way too much authority
- Do not have enough people to do the job
- Good people are getting cut – do not cut on seniority – should be on skill set
- Travel impacted and that is significantly impacting getting things done or decisions being made – budget limitations are short sighted
- Welcome DNR on projects – makes the process easier and better
- Use video-conferencing
- Coordinate the different disciplines – Ch. 30, air, etc. Would like one coordinator. Seems the different groups do not talk to each other.
- Seems like a resistance to get everyone in the room at the same time – between air and sw one of the worst – long term and they have had plenty of time to fix it
- timeliness

**Question 3: What are the current costs to you in the approval, permitting, licensing we do? What are acceptable costs?**

- Fee that gets them to the site is worth it

- Review fees (feasibility report) are high – is relative (maybe a sliding scale or based on tonnage of landfill)
- Streamline the process – look at other states
- Too much duplication during the various reports – for permitting a landfill
- IL – one for locals and one for agency
- Overall cost – review and consulting relatively low, but going over and over questions – too long permitting process – 6 or 7 years with no revenue coming in
- Needs requirement during feasibility stage – a lot of cost to the client goes into this. Would not be built if not financially viable. Make statute into a checklist

**Question 4: What are we doing well in the program?**

- Expedited plan mods
- Some hydros are really good, but it is inconsistent – call and get the answer. Can make decisions and are willing to talk to you. Make a phone call and get things cleared up quickly – depends on who you have, some of this based on building relationships
- Good hands off between senior staff and junior staff
- Writing guidance
- Checklists serve a real purpose for different stages of permitting
- Sharing of drafts approvals and work out problems (good as long as it is a courtesy not as another step in the process)
- Landfill siting process has worked in WI
- Get the groups together – like today's session
- TAC committees have been great lots of good ideas exchanged
- Conservative nature does protect the environment and citizens
- Attitude is customer friendly big difference over last two or three years – back as far as George Meyer

**Question 5: How will you judge if we are successful?**

- Timely approvals
- Project comes to conclusion in reasonable time with equal effort on part of regulator and engineer – team work
- Must adapt to change
- Innovations – solutions and technology
- A way to measure timely approval and see how long it should take and try to fit in that time plan
- Take what we are saying and implement some of these idea
- Balance interests of many groups – facilities get built and environment is protected
- Not everyone is in peace and harmony – some dissent
- Mentor younger staff
- Understand customer's business
- Reasonable budget to train staff – continuing education, presence at technical conferences

**Question 6: What has been your experience in other states in obtaining solid and hazardous waste permits, approvals or licenses?**

- IL – every time they issue a permit it is comprehensive summarizes what has changed and all conditions are in the permit, also has a log number so can reference documents, 5 year permit term (intent is to accommodate new technology – rather than just limit the size of the landfill) Iowa may do it this way also. Siting process is more streamlined – one local and one agency – lots more projects fail because of local issues. Here technical

Very prescriptive on schedules – you know what is going to happen by what date.

- FL, MI – have streamlined permitting
- Because of cost of permitting there are companies that will not even operate here
- We are not any better or any worse than anyone else they work with
- KS – construction and siting in 2 years

- MS has some features we might want to consider – detailed analysis of waste flow and local plans to determine where it goes – comes in place of needs analysis – mostly private land fills, but they have to compete

If you do not meet the time schedule your permitting fee gets refunded to you.

**Question 7: If you could change 3 things about how the Waste Management program operates, what would they be?**

- Improve the code, take the duplication out
- Consistency and better intra-department coordination (air and solid waste)
- Have permits happen quicker – if going to be a ‘no’ then just tell us. Timeliness of permitting
- Group in CO that deals with reviews of alternative designs and technologies – decentralized has its benefits, but central to deal with things outside of norm (senior or experienced staff)
- Performance based requirements rather than prescriptive
- Meet schedules
- Video conferencing
- Budget adequate to address training and internal mentoring
- Adapt to change in technology
- Larger and fewer facilities
- Have permits include all the conditions
- Focus on the big picture – protect the environment – rely on technical designers
- Decisions based on technical merit not politics
- Add staff
- Staff bumping on basis of seniority – wrong getting rid of good people and it costs lots of money to train people
- Implement CO SW overview (does not mean everyone in the same place) for permit review
- Review less things – maybe use checklists
- Self certifications
- More flexible staffing – contract type people to be able to handle workloads

**Question 8: Do you think changes will actually be made to the program that will help business? Why/Why not?**

- Will changes be made – everyone thought so
- Decrease duplication will reduce workload and reduce cost
- Money will limit some of changes
- Money may be a driver
- Need to deal with statutory changes
- External pressure
- We seem to be listening
- If train staff it will make it easier to work with people in the program
- Might be more funding as owners come to the table if they know the service will improve and improve their business model

Gaps

- Have some specifics on codifications or statutory - would like another session like this to do that kind of discussion - that would also help the process

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